

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 922
By Hargrove

A RESOLUTION to direct the Tennessee Regulatory Authority to study the cost and availability of telephone service equipment for the deaf, blind and speech impaired in Tennessee.

WHEREAS, on September 24, 1990, the Tennessee Relay Center was established so the hearing and speech impaired and blind community could have access to telecommunications as a non-physically challenged person; and

WHEREAS, using the Relay Center, a person who is deaf or speech impaired can type their conversation into a telephone device for the deaf (TTD) or a text telephone (TTY/TT); a person who is blind may use a TTY or telebraille telephone (TB); and

WHEREAS, for example, a communications assistant at the Relay Center relays the message by reading it to the hearing person at the other end; the assistant then relays the hearing person's spoken words by typing it back to the TT/TTY user; and

WHEREAS, since the Relay Center's inception, it has enabled thousands of Tennesseans who are speech and hearing impaired, and blind to independently communicate their everyday needs, from medical emergencies to a simple phone call; and

WHEREAS, unfortunately the cost and availability of TTY/TTD and TB equipment may prevent some Tennesseans from being able to access the Relay Center; and

WHEREAS, the cost of TTYS/TTDs and TBs are higher than a regular telephone, with most beginning around \$200; and

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WHEREAS, it is therefore appropriate that the Tennessee Regulatory Authority, the body overseeing telecommunications issues for the state, be requested to study this issue and report to the General Assembly the availability of this equipment and possible solutions to make the equipment more affordable for those Tennesseans who need it; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we hereby direct the Tennessee Regulatory Authority to study the availability of TTY/TTD and TB equipment in Tennessee and make recommendations to the General Assembly on ways to make such equipment more readily available to those citizens who would most benefit from the equipment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Tennessee Regulatory Authority is requested to report their findings to the General Assembly by the opening day of the 101st General Assembly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Tennessee Relay Center is to provide the Tennessee Regulatory Authority with any information necessary to complete this study.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared and forwarded to the Tennessee Regulatory Authority.